

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

MCT-02 HA-05 ACDA-12 COME-00 /093 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2286

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 5006

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PORG, WA, SF

SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: VAN HEERDEN'S COMMENTS ON KATIMA MULILO

1. IN CONVERSATION TODAY AUGUST 25 WITH EMBASSY POLITICAL COUNSELOR, NEIL VAN HEERDEN, FOREIGN MINISTER BOTH'S AIDE, INDICATED THAT THE SITUATION ON THE BORDER WAS STILL TENSE AND HE WOULD NOT SAY IF THE SAG HAD TAKEN ITS FINAL MILITARY ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE SWAPO ATTACK OF AUGUST 23. VAN HEERDEN SAID THAT THE MILITARY WISHED TO STRIKE A TELLING BLOW IN RETALIATION BUT THAT "WE IN DFA" HAVE EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR A LIMITED RESPONSE. THE MILITARY, HE SAID, WOULD NOT AGREE TO STAND BY AND SEE ANOTHER SWAPO ATTACK BEING PREPARED WITHOUT TAKING ACTION TO PRE-EMPT IT.

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2. ACCORDING TO VAN HEERDEN, WHEN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GROUND FORCES CROSSED INTO ZAMBIA AFTER THE SHELLING ATTACK, THE SWAPO FORCES HAD SCATTERED TAKING WITH THEM THE LAUNCHERS FOR THEIR 122MM ROCKETS. THE SWAPO FORCES, HE SAID, WERE NOW CONCENTRATED IN THREE BASES ON THE EASTERN BANK OF THE CHOBI RIVER APPROXIMATELY 40

KMS. NORTH OF THE CAPRIVI/ZAMBIAN BORDER. THIS WAS,
HE WARNED, A DANGEROUS SITUATION FOR BOTH SIDES.

3. THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR EMPHASIZED THAT PRE-EMPTIVE
ATTACKS BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS INTO ZAMBIA COULD BE
HIGHLY DAMAGING TO THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS NOW GOING ON.
VAN HEERDEN REPLIED THAT THE SAG HAD REALIZED THERE
WOULD BE GREATER REVERBERATIONS FOR A PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK
THAN FOR RETALIATION, AND THAT FOR THIS REASON THEY HAD
HELD OFF FROM SUCH ACTION, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD HAD CLEAR
EVIDENCE THAT THE ATTACK WAS COMING. NOW THE MILITARY
WAS SAYING, "LOOK WHAT HAPPENED." VAN HEERDEN EM-
PHASIZED THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT CANNOT SIT
BY AND AGAIN TAKE THE RISK OF SUFFERING THE FIRST BLOW
AND MORE PERSONNEL LOSSES AND ONLY THEN HITTING BACK.

4. VAN HEERDEN STRESSED THAT THE SAG HAD UNASSAILABLE
EVIDENCE THAT LUSAKA HAD FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE ATTACK.
NOT ONLY HAD THE LOCAL MILITARY COMMANDERS BEEN BRIEFED
TWO DAYS BEFORE BY SWAPO FORCES OF THEIR INTENTIONS, BUT,
VAN HEERDEN INDICATED, THIS HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO LUSAKA.
THE PRINCIPAL POINT THAT VAN HEERDEN APPEARED TO BE
MAKING WAS THAT EVIDENCE OF ANY NEW SWAPO PREPARATIONS
FOR OFFENSIVE ACTION WOULD LIKELY BE MET WITH A PRE-
EMPTIVE STRIKE BY THE SADF.

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5. VAN HEERDEN SAID THE DFA WOULD BE DELIVERING TO THE
FIVE WESTER EMBASSIES AS WELL AS TO THE SECRETARY
GENERAL LATER TODAY A MESSAGE ON THE KATIMA MULILO
AFFAIR.
EDMONDSON

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